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ABSTRACT

A survey of 1,041 wage employees and 589 salaried employees at the Sealed Power Corporation was conducted by Muskegon Community College to determine: (1) worker familiarity with the college; (2) worker preference concerning time and location of courses; (3) preferred topics and subject areas for courses of study; and (4) worker familiarity with information sources about the college. Major findings, based on a 22% response rate (37% of the salaried and 14% of the wage employees) revealed that the hourly wage employees tended to take less advantage of the resources and programs of the college than the salaried employees. There was a strong preference by both wage and salaried employees for enrolling in college credit courses as opposed to community service programs. There was a general feeling by both groups that early evenings on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday were the best times for courses. Employees indicated a strong desire for upgrading job skills, business courses, and understanding new technologies. Studying an important public issue with fellow workers was of interest to the majority of hourly wage employees, but to less than 50% of the salaried employees. Employees identified the newspaper and college publications as the best sources of information about the college, but felt they could be best informed through mailings to their home. (JP)

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SURVEY OF EMPLOYEES' INTEREST IN CONTINUING EDUCATION:

A Survey of Salaried Employees and Hourly Wage Employees at Sealed Power Corporation, Muskegon, Michigan

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NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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SURVEY OF EMPLOYEES INTEREST IN CONTINUING EDUCATION: A Survey of Salaried Employees and Hourly Employees at Sealed Power Corporation Muskegon, Michigan

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NEED FOR SURVEY

Muskegon Community College, like many of the two year colleges in the nation, has experienced a change in the characteristics of students over the past decade. With greater concern for lifelong education and a community service emphasis, the community colleges are attracting a student body that tends to be older and more mature than in previous years. This is particularly evident as the average age of students today at M.C.C. is 29 years with well over 60% of the students enrolled on a partial academic load of 9 credits or less. With a significant shift in the basic student population, it is essential that the institution discover some of the basic characteristics of the "new student" target groups now attending.

The participation of business and industry with the Muskegon Community College has been substantial over the past decade, both in terms of supporting College millage campaigns and in encouraging employees to enroll in courses at the College. More than thirty-four (34) companies in the College's service area have provisions for assisting in the tuition and educational expenses for their workers. While this opportunity exists for many workers, there is a question of how many employees are aware of the educational opportunities at the College. Also there appears to be a need to more specifically identify the academic preferences and interests of the workers from industry.

In order to become better acquainted with the potential student population from industry and thus more adequately offer educational programs for them, certain basic information is needed. A recent study on the use of company sponsored tuition-aid programs by workers in the private sector identified certain barriers that prevent employees from continuing their education. [1] The three barriers found in the study were: inadequate information about the education opportunities; inadequate counseling, and lack of linkage between the work site and the educational providers.

While Muskegon Community College enrolls numerous men and women from industry, many with financial assistance from their employer, specific characteristics of this population are unavailable at this time. Moreover, there is a need for this information expressed by William Abbott, Director of the Service Center for Community College - Labor Union Cooperation, of AACJC. A beginning point to removal of barriers is to secure more information from the workers about their educational preferences and interests. Once this is known the institution can begin to better design and schedule programs, courses for them.

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1. Charner I., Knox K. et al <u>An Untapped Resource: Negotiated Tuition and in the Private Sector,</u> National Manpower Institute, May 1978

STUDY DESIGN

The first step was to determine the kind of information needed about industrial workers pertaining to their participation in continuing education at the Community College. To accomplish this two steps were taken: (1) a consultation was held with an AACJC staff member who reviewed several recent studies on the topic and (2) a conference was held with the chief personnel officer of Sealed Power Corporation and the coordinator of Muskegon Area Labor-Management Committee. The latter individual is a member of UAW Local No. 637.

The target population was identified as 1,041 wage employees and 589 salaried employees of the Sealed Power Corporation. The eight item survey form was mailed in late September 1978. There were no provisions for a follow-up due to the concern for confidentiality of responders. The return rate for the survey was 22% for all employees with salaried employees returning 37% and wage employees at 14%.

The survey sought information from workers regarding the level of interest in continuing education particularly as it related to those courses and programs offered by the Community College. The four areas of the survey include: (1) familiarity of the Community College as a local institution, (2) worker preference on time and location of courses and seminars, (3) worker preference of topics and subject areas for courses and study and (4) workers knowledge and familiarity with the information sources (media) about college programs. A tabulation was made of survey results from hourly wage employees who are members of the United Auto Workers. The survey results of the salaried workers were also tabulated and reported as a distinct group. The information from both groups is reported separately in the following sections.

SURVEY RESULTS FROM HOURLY EMPLOYEES

A. Worker familiarity of the Community College as a local educational institution.

There seemed to be a large percentage (75%) of workers who were familiar with the Community College through direct exposure or attendance of functions on campus. Of the various functions listed a third (33%) of those surveyed had enrolled in college credit courses with (27%) having toured the campus at one time or another. Another group of (23%) had attended concerts, plays or athletic contests on campus. The other college functions of lesser popularity were noted in descending order as follows: conferences or meetings 15%, use of library 15%, Planetarium visit 12%, Community Service course 11%, nature area visit 8% and day long workshop or seminar 7%.

The workers favored enrolling in college credit courses over Community Service courses by a ratio of 2 to 1. While the Community College has a broadly based role of providing community service in the community, these results suggest that workers perceive this institution foremost as an academic institution. This was particularly evident in the high percentage of respondents whose primary contact with the College was through enrollment in a college credit course.

Question 1. Have you ever visited or attended functions at the College? N=145
(Please check any that apply)

		N	%
	Yes	109	75
	No	36	25
a.	College credit course	48	33
b.	Community service course	16	11
c.	Planetarium visit	17	12
d.	Concert, play or athletic contest	34	23
e.	Day-long workshop or seminar	10	07
f.	Conference or meeting	22	15
g.	Nature area visit	12	08
h.	Library	23	15
i.	Tour of campus	39	27

Question 2. If you enroll for a course at the College, in what area would it most likely be?

	N	%
College credit	89	63
Community service	53	37

B. Worker preference on time and location of courses and seminars

Due to the work schedule and the pattern of recreational and social life of the workers in any given community, there are certain times of the day and days of the week that are best suited for enrollment in college courses and programs. The workers surveyed in Muskegon had a strong preference (63%) for early evening classes from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. with lesser percentage (25%) desiring classes in the late evening from 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

The third most popular time (identified by 15%) for courses was the morning from 7:00 to 11:30 a.m. The noon hour period from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. was selected by 14%. Very little interest was indicated for afternoon classes.

The days of the week best suited for workers to attend college tended to be clustered around Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday with moderate interest in attending Friday courses. Saturday and Sunday courses registered only minimal interest. These findings indicate an interest in attending activities at the College primarily during the early evening hours of the first four days of the week. While work schedules, no doubt influence these preferences, there is some latitude for activities to be scheduled on campus during the weekend. According to these results however, the workers have limited interest in college courses on Saturday and Sunday.

Question 3. If you decided to enroll at the College, when would be the best time for you to attend? (N=142)

			N	%
a.	Time of Day:			
	Morning	7:00-11:30 a.m.	22	15
	Noon Hours	11:30- 1:00 p.m.	20	14
	Afternoon	1:00- 4:00 p.m.	5	04
	Late Afternoon	4:00- 6:30 p.m.	13	09
	Early Evening	6:30- 8:00 p.m.	90	63
	Late Evening	8:00-10:00 p.m.	35	25
b.	Day of Week:			
	Monday		82	58
	Tuesday		77	54
	Wednesday		77	54
	Thursday		68	48
	Friday		43	30
	Saturday		13	09
	Sunday		11	08

In ranking the location best suited for workers to further their education, the College campus was identified by 53% of respondents as their first choice.

Question 4. If you desire to further your education, where would you prefer to learn? (Please number 1, 3, etc. in order of preference).

a	1. %	2. %	3. %	4. %	5. %
a. At Home	21	34	28	21	13
b. At Work	18	27	29	10	0
c. College Campus	53	18	30	04	04
d. Neighborhood center	08	20	13	58	21
e. Other Location	1	1	2	6	60

The "worker's home" appeared to be the second most popular choice as a location for courses and educational experiences. The "work site" emerged as the third choice with the neighborhood center as the least popular of all the locations listed.

C. Worker preference of subject areas for courses and study

The interest in subjects was heavily weighted in the areas of improving and upgrading employment skills and topics related to the practical matters of starting a business or understanding new technologies. One notable exception was moderate interest in improving communications skills. The subjects relating to social services, arts, humanities, and general studies were of least interest to the workers.

Question 5. What kinds of college subjects would interest you most? (N=142)

	N	%
a. Communication skills (reading, writing, speaking)	30	21
b. Crafts (upholstering, sewing, etc.)	40	28
c. Labor Studies (bargaining, arbitration, etc.)	35	25
d. Business courses (starting your own business, etc.)	45	32
e. General Studies (history, sociology, etc.)	14	10
f. Human Behavior (self-improvement, etc.)	45	32
g. New Technologies (media technology, electronics, etc.)	39	27
h. Social Services(retirees,community organization, etc.)	15	11
i. Upgrading skills for present job	77	54
j. Physical fitness	34	24
k. Current issues (unemployment, energy, etc.)	22	15
l. Foreign Languages	19	13
m. Art (drawing, painting, sculpture)	20	14
n. Music	8	06
o. Other courses of interest	12	08

The idea of studying an important public issue with a group of fellow workers or friends was of interest to a substantial (63%) of the workers. In response to specific topics of interest for study the workers identified "equitable taxation" (43%) and "energy" (34%) as the leading issues. Another topic of high interest was "The Future of Work in America" by 28% of the workers.

Question 8. A. Would you be interested in studying an important public issue with a group of fellow workers or friends?

	N.	%
Yes	88	63
No	51	37

B. If "yes", would any of the following issues be of interest?

a. Energy	47	34
b. Coping with unemployment	21	15
c. The Future of Work in America	39	28
d. Equitable Taxation	60	43
e. Building for Decent Society	27	19
f. Justice for Older Americans	29	21
g. Human rights, the unfinished business	21	15

D. Information sources about the College

Since the College programs are made known to the public through various methods, the study sought to determine which ones are perceived by the workers as the best. Workers were asked to identify the best sources of information about Muskegon Community College by rank ordering six possible means. The newspaper was clearly identified as the single best information source by workers. In second place in this measure were college publications followed by students, friends, radio and t.v. and relatives in that order.

Question 6. What have been the best sources of information about Muskegon Community College? (Please rank them 1 for best, 2 for second best, etc.)

	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %
a. College Publications	28	11	17	20	17
b. Newspaper	30	25	17	15	15
c. Radio or T.V.	2	14	19	19	24
d. Students	17	19	13	23	12
e. Friends	9	23	16	15	15
f. Relatives	7	7	17	8	17

A further attempt was made in the survey to determine how the College can best inform the worker of course offerings and activities in the College. "Direct Mailings" to the home was mentioned by 74% of the respondents as the best source followed by bulletin board announcements (45%), ads in local newspaper (43%), company or union newspapers (27%), pamphlets and brochures (25%), and radio and t.v. announcements (18%).

Question 7. How can the College best inform you of course offerings at the College? N=145

	N	%
a. Announcements on company or plant bulletin boards	66	45
b. Direct mailings to your home	107	74
c. Radio or television announcements	26	18
d. Ads in the local newspapers	62	43
e. Pamphlets and brochures on specific programs	36	25
f. Information in company or union newspapers	39	27

II. SURVEY RESULTS FROM SALARIED EMPLOYEES

A. Famaliarity of Salaried Employees with the College as a Local Educational Institution.

The salaried workers as a group were most familiar with the College through attendance of functions on campus. The vast majority, represented by 88% of the respondents had visited the College Campus.

In reviewing the specific activities and functions that employees attended, it was found that 50% had enrolled in college credit classes in the past. Also 37% had attended a conference or meeting at the College and 28% had taken a day long workshop or seminar there. There was involvement by salaried employees in attending concerts, plays and athletic contests (33%) with (22%) claiming use of the library. About one person in five (or 19%) had enrolled in Community Service courses or toured the campus with a slightly smaller percentage having visited the planetarium.

One observation of these findings is that courses, programs, and activities which are scheduled (college courses, workshops and seminars) seem to have better attendance than those activities that are "drop in" or leisure activities. Also there appears to be a perception of the College as a traditional academic institution as evidenced by the high percentage of respondents who would enroll in the college credit courses as preference to the Community Service courses.

Question 1. Have you ever visited or attended functions at the College? (Please check any that apply) N=215

	N.	%
Yes	190	88
No	25	12
a. College credit course	107	50
b. Community service course	41	19
c. Planetarium visit	30	14
d. Concert, play or athletic contest	72	33
e. Day-long workshop or seminar	60	28
f. Conference or meeting	79	37
g. Nature area visit	11	5
h. Library	48	22
i. Tour of campus	41	19

Question 2. If you enroll for a course at the College, in what area would it most likely be?

	N.	%
College credit	147	70
Community Service	62	30

B. Preference of Time and Location of Courses

The early evening hours from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. were selected by approximately 82% of the salaried employees as the best time for courses. The second most popular time for courses was late evening with 36% indicating a preference for that period between 8:00 and 10:00. Very few seemed interested in courses offered other times of the day.

Salaried employees favored the Monday through Thursday week days as the best time for the classes with limited interest for a Friday class. The Saturday and Sunday classes were of least interest to the group.

Question 3. If you decided to enroll at the College, when would be the best time for you to attend classes? N=209

			N	%
a. Time of Day:	Morning	7:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.	15	7
	Noon Hours	11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	15	7
	Afternoon	1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	4	2
	Late Afternoon	4:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.	11	5
	Early Evening	6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.	171	82
	Late Evening	8:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.	76	36
b. Day of Week:	Monday		129	62
	Tuesday		133	64
	Wednesday		130	62
	Thursday		114	55
	Friday		45	22
	Saturday		17	8
	Sunday		8	4

The location most desirable for salaried employees to further their education was identified as the college campus. The home or "at work" seemed to be of equal desirability and ranked second and third. The neighborhood center was considered least suitable for classes.

Question 4. If you desire to further your education, where would you prefer to learn? (Please number 1, 3, etc. in order of preference.)

	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %
a. At Home	18	28	32	21	4
b. At Work	11	35	30	19	4
c. College Campus	65	19	17	9	4
d. Neighborhood Center	04	17	02	51	19
e. Other	02	02		0	70

C. Preference of Subject Areas for Courses and Study

The interest on the part of salaried employees in college subjects was the greatest in the four areas of: upgrading skills in present job (55%), business courses (43%), communication skills (34%) and human behavior (33%). The areas of moderate interest were classes in new technologies (20%) and labor studies (19%). These results indicate an interest in classes that will enhance one's employment capabilities at the present job or preparation for employment in another kind of work, i.e., starting one's own business. There was minimal interest noted in courses like art, music, languages and general studies that may be considered liberal arts or humanities courses.

Question 5: What kinds of college subjects would interest you most? N=209

		N	%
a.	Communication skills (reading, writing, speaking)	73	34
b.	Crafts (upholstering, sewing, etc.)	33	16
c.	Labor Studies (bargaining, arbitration, etc.)	39	19
d.	Business courses	89	43
e.	General Studies (history, sociology, etc.)	19	09
f.	Human Behavior (self-improvement, etc.)	70	33
g.	New Technologies (media technology, electronics)	41	20
h.	Social Services (retirees, community organization)	11	05
i.	Upgrading skills for present job	114	55
j.	Physical fitness	30	14
k.	Current issues (unemployment, energy, etc.)	28	13
l.	Foreign languages	23	11
m.	Art (drawing, painting, sculpture)	13	06
n.	Music	12	06
o.	Other courses of interest	20	10

When asked about their interest in studying an important issue with a group of fellow workers or friends, one half (54%) of respondents indicated no interest. For those who did register interest in a topic 24% selected either "energy" or "equitable taxation." About 13% indicated an interest in the topic "Building the Decent Society." The topics of unemployment, justice for older Americans, and future work in America all share the same level of interest by 8% of those polled. Human rights was least mentioned as a topic of interest with 6% interest registered.

Question 8. A. Would you be interested in studying an important public issue with a group of fellow workers and friends?

	N	%
Yes	92	46
No	109	54

B. If "yes", would any of the following issues be of interest? N=201

a.	Energy	49	24
b.	Coping with Unemployment	16	08
c.	The Future of Work in America	39	19
d.	Equitable Taxation	49	24
e.	Building the Decent Society	26	13
f.	Justice for Older Americans	17	08
g.	Human Rights the Unfinished Business	12	06

D. Information Sources About the College

Reaching the public with information about the programs and courses at the College is a task accomplished by utilizing various media. The survey attempted to determine what the salaried employees consider the best sources of information about Muskegon Community College by ranking six information sources. College publications ranked first by the largest portion (43%) of employees indicating general agreement on that media as a key information source. The newspaper is the second most popular information source with students and friends following in that order. The radio and t.v. is fifth most popular and relatives rank last.

Question 6. What have been the best sources of information about Muskegon Community College? (Please rank them 1 for best, 2 for second best, etc.)

	1. %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	6 %
a. College Publications	46	15	14	16	13	02
b. Newspaper	22	27	26	13	18	04
c. Radio or T.V.	03	11	19	14	27	33
d. Students	12	21	19	20	16	06
e. Friends	11	19	17	31	09	04
f. Relatives	05	07	05	06	16	05

The survey also was designed to determine how the Community College could best inform the employees of course offerings and activities. Direct mailings to one's home was the leading choice by 69% of respondents, and bulletin board announcements received 53% of the vote. Ads in the newspaper followed at 40% with pamphlets and brochures at 29%. The two sources receiving the least support were company or union newspapers and radio and t.v.

Question 7. How can the College best inform you of course offerings and activities at the College?

	N	%
a. Announcements on company or plant bulletin boards?	115	53
b. Direct mailings to your home	150	69
c. Radio and television announcements	21	10
d. Ads in local newspapers	85	40
e. Pamphlets and brochures on specific programs	63	29
f. Information in company or union newspapers	30	14

CONCLUSIONS

1. In general the employees were familiar with the Community College since a majority of the respondents had visited or attended functions at the College in the past. For both groups two of the more popular activities were enrollment in college credit courses, and attending concerts, plays and athletic contests. Salaried employees also identified with the College through attendance at conferences or meetings and day-long workshops. As a group the hourly wage employees tended to take less advantage of the various resources and programs at the College compared to the salaried employees.

2. There was a strong preference by both wage and salaried employees for enrolling in college credit courses as opposed to community service courses. Evidently the College is still perceived by many as an institution that provides "college level" or academic courses as evidenced by the responses to the first two questions in the Survey. The limited use of the campus resources - library, planetarium, nature area, suggests that the College is perceived primarily as an academic institution providing instruction through the traditional classroom method.

3. There was general feeling by both groups that Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday are best days for courses at the College. Early evening hours seem to be best suited for the employees but there was moderate interest expressed for late evening classes. There was limited interest for morning hour classes and very little support for Saturday and Sunday courses.

4. The selection of subjects of interest to employees indicated a strong desire for upgrading job skills, business courses and understanding new technologies. These responses indicate a preference for those experiences that enhance one's employment capabilities and preparation for employment in another kind of work, possibly in business. For both groups of employees the subjects relating to social services, art, music, languages, and general studies had limited appeal.

5. Studying an important public issue with fellow workers or friends is an activity of interest to the majority of hourly wage employees. However less than half of the salaried employees surveyed indicated such an interest. For both employee groups who were interested in the study of public issues, the two most popular topics were "energy" and "equitable taxation". Another topic "The Future of Work in America" also registered substantial interest by both groups.

6. Employees identified the newspaper and college publications as two of the best sources of information about the College. The other sources in order of their importance were students, friends, radio and t. v. and relatives. There was general agreement between wage and salaried employees on this issue with one exception. Salaried employees ranked college publications first whereas hourly wage employees listed newspapers in first place.

7. Employees felt the College could best inform them of courses and activities at the College by direct mailings to their home. This was followed by announcements on company or plant bulletin boards and ads in local newspapers. Pamphlets and brochures on specific programs and information in company or union newspapers ranked fourth and fifth. Radio and television announcements were considered the least helpful by the employees.

8. Both the salaried employees and the hourly wage employees rank the College Campus as their first choice for a location to take further education. Both groups of employees ranked "at home" and "at work" as second and third choice for location for their further education and the neighborhood center was considered least desirable of the four locations.

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